



BATTLE SPEAKERS CLUB: Meeting roles

The roles give us plenty of varied opportunity for practising communication skills, and are valuable speaking opportunities to develop our listening skills. They are **not**, though, a general speaking opportunity and speakers need to respect both the allocated time, and keep the focus on the role itself.

It's a good idea for new members to start with a more structured role that has less speaking, such as the Warm-up, Hot Tip, Ah Counter and Timekeeper. Only those with some speaking experience should evaluate a speech or role. The role of Toastmaster and General Evaluator are for those who have some familiarity with speaking, and with the roles.

Addressing your audience

The standard speaker address to the audience is: Mr/Madam Toastmaster (or Mr/Madam Table Topics Chair, as appropriate); fellow Toastmasters and most welcome guests (when there are guests!), and to shake hands with the Toastmaster/Table Topics Chair when you come up to the front and leave it.

'The stage'

The speaking area is referred to as 'the stage' in speakers' clubs. **Speakers shake hands** with the person introducing them when they get to the stage, and shake hands again with that person when they leave the stage. This formality expresses the 'handing over' of the stage to the next speaker.

Key roles in every Battle Speakers meeting

Sergeant at Arms

- Gather people to their seats for a punctual start, call the meeting to start, introduce the President and hand the meeting over to him/her. At the end of the break, bring people back to their seats, call the meeting to order and introduce the Toastmaster.

Warm-up

- This is a snappy ice-breaker to give everyone a brief opportunity to speak.
- Prepare a subject or question that can easily be answered in 15 seconds. Everyone answers the same topic. **Briefly** introduce the format, including the speaker to stand at his/her seat and begin with their name, and applause to be left until after you have finished.
- Start with your own answer first. Then indicate who is next, and which way around the room. Stay standing at the front, until the end when you complete with a finishing remark and hand the stage back.

Grammarian

- Record and comment on the use of language, particularly well expressed and creative usage of English, interesting words and phrases and any ongoing poor grammar (with appropriate diplomacy!), within time.
- Also, prepare a 'word of the day' that is stretching but accessible and helps us to expand our vocabulary, and print a couple of copies of the word, with brief definition, in large font size to put on the wall. Explain the word's usage, giving a couple of examples, and encourage speakers to include the word when they speak. Record and report the number of times the word is used by each speaker.

Ah Counter

- Note and report back, with tact, on the use of 'ums', 'ahs' and 'filler' words, which detract from a good presentation and clear speaking.

Timekeeper

- Record and report on how long each participant speaks, **excluding** the warm-up, to develop our skill of speaking to a specific time (as we are often allocated a time for a meeting or presentation in the 'real world' where it is important not to overrun). A stopwatch is provided. Each role or speech is given a minimum and maximum speaking time, shown on the agenda.
- The timekeeper also indicates to the speaker how much time is left, by use of the 'traffic light' system: the green light goes on at the minimum time (the first time given), is switched off at the middle time, when the orange light goes on, and the red light is for the maximum time (the orange is switched off).
- Report on times is in order of speaker, starting with the minimum and maximum allotted time, and then the time the speaker actually took.

Hot Tip

- A pre-prepared useful tip from any aspect of speaking – delivery, structure, content or ideas generation – of up to two minutes.

Speech Evaluator

- Helps the speaker to develop speaking skills, by giving a verbal and written evaluation of an allocated speech, starting with the speech's objectives from the manual. Ideally, contacts the speaker before the meeting to find out what speech they are delivering and whether they have specific points they want evaluated, in addition to the manual objectives. Education speeches are not normally evaluated.
- Note precise observations and supporting evidence. Creating a grid of commendations, recommendations, commendations, for note-taking is simplest. A 'sandwich' approach of specific positive feedback on what worked well, two or three suggestions for improvement, ending on more of the speaker's good points and giving a brief summary, creates an easy structure and gives valuable feedback the speaker can take away. Evaluations are to be objective, constructive and encouraging, and particularly supportive for new speakers. They are to have examples and demonstrations to explain and support the points. These can cover preparation, organisation, delivery, content, structure, enthusiasm, audience engagement, use of equipment or notes, and so on. **Note:** there's no need to repeat back content: we heard the speech. What you say needs to be for the benefit of the speaker. You can always add more verbally to the speaker later, in private, if you would like to expand on ideas for development.
- Language needs to be factual and the evaluation is the evaluator's own opinion, and needs to reflect this; ie "I felt/I thought/I liked ..." and not "We all/Everyone thought ..." However, it also needs to be as objective as possible, describing specifics – "I saw/I heard/I noticed ..." – and not subjective views, such as whether you are interested in the content choice! You can, though, also include the impact the speech had on you. Comments are to the audience in general, although some personalise the recommendations.

Table Topics Chair

- Prepare a theme, and questions or topics within this, for unprepared speeches that give members practise speaking 'off the cuff'. Have a wide selection ready so that you can adjust according to the speaker.
- Keep an eye on the time against the agenda and, if needed after liaison with the Toastmaster, decide on the number of speakers and adjust the length of the table topics (normally 1 – 2 minutes) according to whether we are ahead, behind or on schedule. Confirm your timing with the timekeeper and announce if different to the norm. In the break, ask guests if they would like to participate. Allocate speakers according to those who have not spoken that evening first, and those who have had small speaking roles next. It's recommended to start with someone who is normally comfortable with table topics.
- Briefly introduce the role, the theme, the individual topic and the speaker. **Lead applause**. Keep topic brief, repeating if needed. Make a closing remark after last speaker and hand back to the Toastmaster.

Table Topics Evaluator

- State what the Table Topics Chair and each Table Topics speaker did well and give a suggestion or two for improvement next time. Evaluate the Chair (both how they ran the session and their speaking), the session as a whole and each topics speaker. Do not go over topics content again. See Speech Evaluator for how to evaluate. It is better to give a brief commendation, recommendation, commendation to each speaker, rather than a long one to a few and nothing to others – every speaker is entitled to feedback.

Toastmaster

- Act as a genial host and Chair, and conduct the meeting programme according to the Agenda, introducing participants and keeping the evening on time.
- Arrive early, reserve a seat at the front and liaise with the Vice President Education (VPE) about any changes on the agenda. Note any no-shows, and, liaising with appropriate people, re-arrange the agenda to accommodate changes if needed.
- Introduce each speaker in a friendly, positive and clear manner, **leading the applause** as the speaker comes to, and leaves, the front. The professional approach is to say the speaker's name last in the introduction ("... please welcome Toastmaster Fred Smith") and keep strong applause going until the speaker has reached the front. Evaluators read speech objectives from their seats; you introduce speakers. Decide on the length of the break according to how on time (or not!) we are (5 – 15 minutes).
- Provide a short link between speakers; possibly commenting on the previous speaker before introducing the next. The point here is to be relevant and focused; this is not a general speaking opportunity!

General Evaluator

- Evaluates everything except prepared speeches, Table Topics Chair and Table Topics speeches, as these will have already been evaluated, and we don't want this repeated. Receiving feedback is a key part of the Toastmasters experience – everyone is entitled to leave a meeting having received feedback – so this includes all roles, from the President and Sergeant at Arms to the Warm-up and Toastmaster. It is, though, the Table Topics Evaluator's responsibility to evaluate the Table Topics Chair.
- Also considers the meeting in general: was it kept to time, is the room set up well, how was the organisation and atmosphere; any feedback for the club in general.
- Please see Speech Evaluator above for evaluation tips, and also consider how well roles were carried out.

Please do ask the VPE, President, past President or an experienced member any questions.